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Eberhardt Blueberries

EBERHARDT BLUEBERRY NURSERIES

OLYMPIA, WASH.

The Most Promising Bush Fruit Today Is The Cultivated Blueberry

BLUEBERRY growing is fast becoming a large and important industry in several of the eastern states and a decade of experimenting has proved that climatic conditions on the West Coast are as well, if not better suited to the cultivation of this delicious fruit.

The cultivated eastern blueberry, Vaccinium Corymbosum, is closely related to a family of shrubs which includes the Heathers, Rhododendrons, Azaleas and all of our native wild blueberries or huckleberries. However, true huckleberries of the eastern United States (Gaylussacia) differ somewhat from the true blueberry; the huckleberry contains ten large seeds, while the blueberry has a number of relatively small seeds.

SOIL AND SOIL REQUIREMENTS

An acid soil, rich in leaf mold and with an abundance of moisture throughout the growing season, is necessary for success in blueberry culture. Peat bogs, alder bottoms, willow and cedar swamps, when cleared, make ideal locations for blueberries, as do upland soils containing a large amount of leaf mold and naturally or artificially well supplied with moisture. Gravelly or sandy soils overlaid with a grassy turf may also be suitable if irrigation can be supplied during a dry season.

An experiment tried in our field on a strip of sandy upland soil where a layer of sawdust was applied as a mulch between the rows of blueberry plants, has given excellent results. The mulch of sawdust not only supplied the necessary acidity to the soil, but served as a fertilizer as well. Also, the sawdust on the soil conserved sufficient moisture to ripen a large crop of berries and kept the field free of weeds.

FOR HOME GARDENS

For a small home garden planting, suitable soil can easily be prepared by working leaf mold and rotted sawdust or commercial peat into the ground. Even in localities where the native soil is unsuitable for the growing of blueberries in the garden, they can be grown successfully in tubs filled with the prepared soil. Blueberry plants set out this way make a beautiful and ornamental addition to any garden.

PLANTING AND SPACING

Planting time in our latitude is from October to April and although fall planting is preferred, both spring and fall planting have proved successful.

The plant should not be permitted to fruit for one or two seasons after setting it out, and pinching the flower buds on young plants promotes more rapid growth. Young blueberry plants generally set the first crop of berries at two years and a commercial crop may be expected the third year.

In a commercial planting the rows and plants should be spaced far enough apart to permit two way cultivation; a spacing of eight feet by four feet seems quite suitable. For home gardens a spacing of five feet by three feet is generally sufficient. It is advisable to plant two or more varieties, as the pollinating of the blueberry is done by insects, mainly bumblebees.

CULTIVATION AND CARE

It is important that the field be kept free of weeds from blooming time, which is late April to May until harvesting begins. In localities where irrigation is necessary watering should be started before the ground gets too dry and when there is no rain, irrigation should be continued throughout the growing season.

SUN OR SHADE

While blueberries do well in partially shady locations, full sun is preferable, as the fruit ripens earlier, more evenly and the sugar content of the berries is higher.

TEMPERATURE

High summer temperatures will not injure the blueberry providing the plants do not suffer from lack of moisture. The plants themselves will stand a winter temperature several degrees below zero. While the blueberry seems more resistant to late spring frosts than some small fruit, avoid extremely frosty locations.

A Profitable New Industry for the West Coast

ALTITUDE

The blueberry plants thrive and fruit abundantly from sea level to an altitude of several thousand feet.

FERTILIZER

For several seasons we have used a complete fertilizer 6-10-6, the base of which is tankage. This has given excellent results here. Barnyard fertilizer, too, has given us good results and is suitable as a top dressing applied during a time when plants are dormant. However, it should not be applied to young plants when first set out.

HARVESTING

Early varieties of the cultivated blueberry generally ripen here the latter part of June and the picking season continues until late in August. The ripe berries hang on the bushes exceptionally well, so it is not necessary to pick over the same row more than once a week.

YIELD

Blueberry plants require from six to eight years to reach full maturity, at which time the plants should be from five to eight feet tall and under ideal conditions should produce four tons of berries to the acre. With proper care they will continue to bear record crops many years thereafter. Blueberry plants have been known to live and fruit fifty years and more.

INSECT PESTS AND SPRAYING

Insect pests have not been troublesome and at present no spraying is necessary. It is advisable not to plant blueberry plants near a field of diseased cane fruits.

PRUNING

Pruning the blueberry bushes is very important, as it not only increases the size of the fruit, but the vigor of the plant as well. Young wood produces the largest fruit and some of the older wood should be removed annually in order to force as much young wood as possible.

ORNAMENTAL

Blueberries are very showy shrubs and they should be used in every home garden. In the spring the bush is covered with waxy white flower bells; summer brings large clusters of beautiful blue berries, and in the fall the foliage turns to rich crimson and scarlet. Blueberry bushes also make an attractive hedge.

We have been commercial growers of blueberries for a decade, having gained a large and valuable store of experience which we gladly pass on to our customers. PLANT EBERHARDT BLUEBERRIES.

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